



As we enter the new year, I can't help but think about how far we have come and how much we have grown. I was recently talking to our young people about our pandemic years and one of them said how much they hated how much it changed things, and another said but we have changed and grown so much because of it.

As I reflect on those words, I can't help but agree with both. We have changed so much. Some of it has been so painful and challenging, and some has been so life giving and healthy and some have been both. Change is inevitable, it's the only constant in this physical place we live in, that and God's love for us.

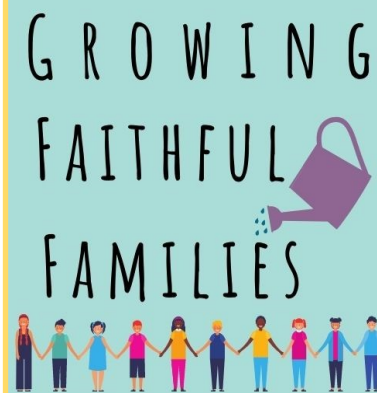
It's true that we have changed, and that we continue too. We have seen change in the form of Sunday school, youth group, Trunk or Treat, Christmas programs, and even passing the peace. The shift in the last year has all been change that works towards us getting together.

We gathered in so many new ways. One of my favorite evolutions this past year was our Advent Exhibit. It was incredible to see so many of God's gifts in our Holy C community and beyond.

We hoped people would take their vision of the Nativity and Christ's humble beginning and put it on display. Gabriel Kearney made his vision out of Legos and when he saw it he said to me "I have never seen my Lego creations on display for people".

It makes me so happy to see our young people proud of themselves for trying new things and using the gifts God gave them. I'll be the first to tell you that God has given us gifts to help us evolve, to grow, and still be the body of Christ, even in the inevitable. Its pretty cool to see God at work in this place whether its familiar or new.

Deacon Beka Forst



Faithful Families Tip— God's Promises

- One of the great gifts we can give our children is the ability to recall God's scriptural promises any time.
- Families can learn these passages by reciting them together, one passage each day for a week, as a part of mealtime or bedtime prayer. Some examples are Genesis 12:2-3, Luke 4:18-19, and Romans 12:1-2.



The Holy Comforter Comment

January Newsletter

"⁷The teaching of the Lord is perfect and revives the soul; the testimony of the Lord is sure and gives wisdom to the simple."

~Psalm 19:7

Worship Opportunities for January

- Worship with us Sundays at 10:30 am.
- Outside Worship will be offered at 8:30 am on Sunday, January 2nd & January 16th.
- Each 10:30 am service is livestreamed on the website and transmitted to the parking lot over the radio and communion is served to those present.

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Micah Kearney, *Pastor*

Email: mkearney@holyc.org

Greg Cline, *Organist /Choirmaster*

Beka Forst, *Deacon of Discipleship*

Sandra Askey, *Office Manager*

Church Office Hours: Monday—Thursday: 8:30 am-2:00 pm

Music Notes

From Greg Cline

Friends, at the time of this writing we have just concluded our midweek Advent services of worship. This year was particularly special in the fact that these series of services were canceled in 2020. Special words of thanks to our adult choir members who led the singing, as they do for most services of worship throughout the year.

"Unfailing Light" has become a favorite Advent liturgical offering. I don't usually like to single out folks, for it is very easy to miss someone in the process. But in this case I would wish to thank Beka Forst and Julia Gunter for assisting the youth handbell ensemble. Jack Bryant is now a youth veteran in the group. Erin Cassel, Gabriel Kearney, and Alex Bocchino were beginning ringers this year, but demonstrated their capabilities quite well.

Christmas Eve services loom on the horizon, but will be history by the time this newsletter is printed. I must say that many of our choir members have come together this Christmas to ensure that we have inspirational music for the most beautiful service of the year. The handbell and chamber ensembles likewise have been involved in this preparation. There are churches with far greater membership numbers that have packed their handbell equipment in storage, who have abandoned traditional choirs, sold their pipe organs in favor of praise bands...sometimes only because there are not enough willing souls to support the music ministry. So to these hearty ministers of music at Holy Comforter who have given so freely of their time and talent that the name of Christ is lifted high

once again in 2021-2022, thank you on behalf a grateful congregational family.

One of the Christmas anthems that we are debuting this year I think also speak to us in this upcoming Epiphany Season:

Now the Heavens start to whisper, as the veil is growing thin. Earth from slumber wakes to listen to the stirring, faint within.

Seed of promise, deeply planted, child to spring from Jesse's stem! Like the soil beneath the frostline, hearts grow soft to welcome Him.

Heavy clouds that block the moonlight now begin to drift away. Diamond brilliance through the darkness shines the hope of coming day.

Christ the morning star of splendor gleams within a world grown dim. Heaven's ember fans to fullness; hearts grow warm to welcome Him.

Christ eternal sun of justice, Christ the rose of wisdom's seed, come to bless with fire and fragrance hours of yearning, hurt, and need.

In the lonely, in the stranger, in the outcast, hid from view: Child who comes to grace the manger, teach our hearts to welcome you.

A Blessed 2022 to all my church family.

Greg Cline MD (Music Director)
(704-860-4460)



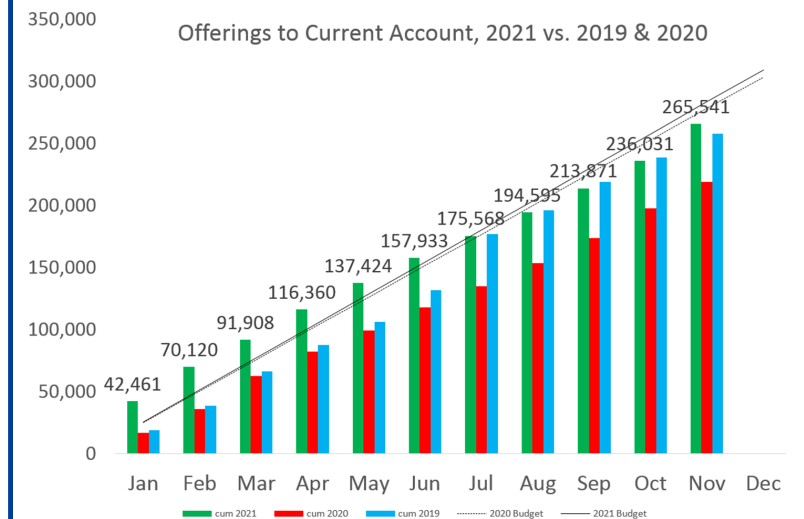
We would like your help! Each Sunday this person will be here for the Sunday school and Worship hour, 9:15 am-12:00 pm. If you know of anyone who would be interested in working in the nursery with our littles or you need more information please reach out to Beka.

Treasurer's Report for November 2021

Holy Comforter's operating surplus (offering income in excess of expenses) during November was \$2,939.50. Total giving to support Holy Comforter's routine expenses for the month was \$29,510.00. The budget estimate of the amount needed each month in 2021 is \$25,767.00. Year-to-date spending, through November 30, was \$17,895.87 below the amount planned in the 2021 budget. The adjacent chart compares this year's offering income, by month, with that of the two previous years. This and last year's budget tracks are also presented in the graph.

Warren Heller

Holy Comforter Treasurer Report



Prime Timers Bible Study

Our Prime Timers group, those of retirement age and up, will gather again for Bible Study in person on Thursday, January 13th at 10:30am. We will meet at the church in the fellowship hall. We will be looking at the gospel of Luke 3: 7-18. We look forward to a time of Bible Study and fellowship together!

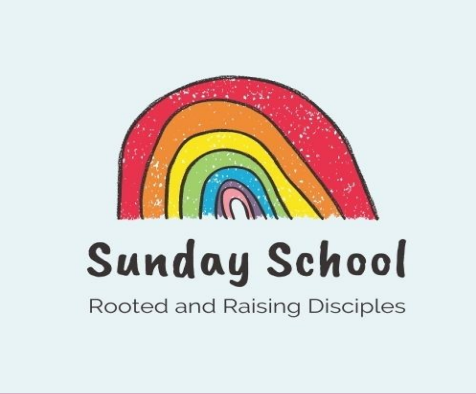
The schedule below is our expected weekly programs and meetings. When exceptions happen they will be posted on the website calendar and in weekly emails.

All activities will resume on January 9th

- Sundays:**
9:30 am– Sunday School
10:30 am-Worship in Sanctuary
5:00 pm-HCY (*First three Sundays*)
5:00pm– Discipleship Academy (*Fourth Sunday*)
5:00 pm-Handbells
6:00 pm-Church Choir
- *Service livestreamed on website and transmitted by radio to parking lot.
- Tuesdays:**
7:00 pm- Nar-Anon
- Wednesdays:**
4:00 pm- Adult Faith Formation afternoon video
7:00 pm– Chamber Choir


Events to Note:

- Sundays, January 2nd & January 16th / Outdoor Worship– 8:30am



Teachers are needed to help execute our plan for growing faith in our kids and adults alike. This is a great opportunity to meet and interact with the young people that help make up our vibrant faith family. We hope that you will prayerfully consider serving as a Sunday School teacher this year. **For more information, contact Jill Cassel or Beka Forst.**

Shout out to our new teachers this year, Katie Piscatelli, Rianna Nance, and Brittany Lewis! We are so thankful for your willingness to serve and share your gifts!



BIBLE 103
OLD TESTAMENT
— DISCIPLESHIP ACADEMY —

Discipleship Academy is for anyone!!

This credit will explore some of the main characters and events of the Old Testament. This is a one credit course
January 23rd at 5pm.

For more information please contact Beka Forst or Pastor Micah.

As our council leadership transitions this month, we give thanks to Andy Robinson and Matthew Hogge who have served on council in such a challenging time as we’ve had and are now rotating off. We also give thanks for our lone new member, Greg Byrum, who has served on council previously and now joins us again. We appreciate the time, energy, and faithfulness that this service takes, and the willingness of all who serve on council to offer it in dedication to Christ’s mission and ministry through Holy Comforter.

Outdoor Worship Services

Outdoor Worship Services will take place the 1st and 3rd Sunday of each month at 8:30 am under the tent.

Holy Comforter Lutheran Church

January Birthdays

We recognize and celebrate these birthdays in the month of January. We are thankful for the Life and Spirit of those we celebrate. May the blessings of God flow in the life of each of you.

January 1	Marybeth Kokanovich
January 4	Jason Shoemaker
January 5	Joan Irwin
	Riley Lewis
January 7	Mary Lee
January 9	Chuck Kimball
January 10	Charles Mauney
	Brandy Milton
	Becky Richards
January 13	Abbey Kowalewski
January 18	Jerri Wesson
January 19	Faye Heller
January 20	Amelia Lewis
January 21	Jane Howard
	Paul Nault
	Travis Rhyne
January 24	Jill Cassel
January 25	Ryan Nelson
January 26	Matthew Carr
	Robert Kressler
January 29	Gina Rhyne

If we have unintentionally left any member’s name off the birthday list, or if there are any errors, please call the church office.

Thank you.



Grace and Peace,

Somehow we're already beginning 2022. The older I get, the faster time seems to go, but these past couple of years seem like they've defied the laws of time, lasting forever and happening in an instant all at once. It seems like the children of Holy Comforter have aged five years in less than two. In many ways it feels like we've lost out on opportunities to be a part of each other's lives, to celebrate milestones and accompany each other in times of struggle. So much of me, all of me really, is ready for this pandemic time to be done, to put it behind me and just move forward. It's tempting to treat a new year as a new start, a clean slate. But I think that'd be a mistake.

For one, the problems of 2021 still need to be solved, not ignored, and we carry that challenge with us into a new year. But also, and more hopefully, because there were good things in 2021 that I don't want to leave behind either. I've had to remind myself, when I get dejected, to look for the life-giving things taking place around me and within the life of the church. And as weird as things have been, they've been there. In the midst of the chaos of the pandemic we've had plenty of folks who have found Holy Comforter to be a community of faith in which they want to be a part.

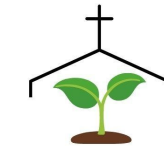
We've had youth continue to engage community and faith even when worship doesn't feel safe for their families, finding this community to be an important one to give life in this time, and to engage hard questions that have come up. Our Prime Timers' Bible Study has been a beautiful community of both engagement and wrestling with faith, as well as mutual support in hardships of life, pandemic or otherwise. I loved the art that members of our church created for our Advent Exhibit that has decorated the sanctuary. Even when we may not feel at our best, Christ has been at work in and through this community.

I am excited for 2022 not as an opportunity for a clean slate, but because of the life-giving things that we bring into it, and because of the healing that I believe will continue to take

place. We have work to do, but at its best 2021 has been a reminder that we do this work with the presence of Christ accompanying us and weaving grace even into the challenges we face. Happy New Year, and may it be one in which Christ's presence in your life is sure, no matter what the year may bring.

Yours in Christ,

Pastor Micah



Planting Hope

In early December, a small group of Holy Comforter's members gathered together to craft a new purpose statement for Holy Comforter. They weren't creating it from thin air, but instead used a conversation Pastor Danielle Denise, Director of Evangelical Mission for the NC Synod, led with folks who were willing to stay after worship weeks prior and engage the conversation. That conversation, coupled with interviews we'd done with members of the church in 2019 and 2020, shaped the content we used to create the draft statement. This statement came from our own members.

From those conversations and the work done that night, the draft for the proposed purpose statement is: ***"Journeying through faith in a joyful, safe community, welcoming and serving Belmont and beyond."*** We've since workshopped that statement with the youth group, the Prime Timers' Bible study, and council, and have had a good response to it from those groups. The main question we're asking isn't about the wording (imagine having 200+ editors for one sentence), but instead is ***"Does this statement feel true for you and your experience at Holy Comforter? How?"*** Our hope is that everyone will be able to connect with at least parts of the statement in their own experience, and we'd love to hear stories of how this is true for you.

Remember that purpose statements are both descriptive and aspirational. This statement should name who we are as well as how we hope to grow as a community of faith. Our hope is that this statement will be a tool for evangelism, giving us language to tell others who we are, as well as a strategic planning tool, helping us shape our work to better serve our call and sense of purpose in Christ's name.

On January 9th we will take a look at this statement together and invite folks to share stories of how this is true for them. Think on it in the meantime, and let Pastor Micah know if you have a story you'd like shared.